American Trader Trustee Council

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Annual Report 2001

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American Trader Final Seabird Restoration Plan Available, April 2001

The final Natural Resource Restoration Plan for Seabirds injured by the American Trader oil spill has been completed by the American Trader Natural Resource Trustee Council — National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and California Department of Fish and Game Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) — and is now available to the public.

Xantus's Murrelet Chick, Anacapa Island 2001

The Plan describes projects selected to restore seabird resources injured as a result of the 1990 *American Trader* incident, which spilled over 400,000 gallons of crude oil offshore of Huntington Beach. This document also describes the affected environment and resources injured by the oil spill.

The oil contaminated over 60 square miles of ocean waters and 15 miles of shoreline, and affected thousands of marine organisms, including seabirds. The Trustee agencies (continued on next page)

Progress on Rat Removal on Anacapa Island

It's happening. The National Park Service and the Island Conservation Group along with the American Trader Trustee Council successfully implemented the first of two phases of a project aimed at removing rats from Anacapa Island in the Channel Islands National Park. These unwelcome pests probably invaded Anacapa Island over 100 years ago and have adversely affected nesting birds, native vegetation and the overall balance of life on the island. This project should not only enhance bird populations on the island, the main goal of the American Trader Trustee Council, but will also enhance the island's overall ecosystem, the main goal of the National Park Service and the Island Conservation Group.

The weather finally cooperated and the helicopter showed up on Anacapa Island in early December. The team of restoration biologists ran a safe and smooth operation spreading rodenticide throughout the habitat of the black rat. Prior to the helicopter's arrival, a team of biologists from UC Santa Cruz's Predatory Bird Research Group caught and relocated predatory birds including hawks and owls. A second application of rodenticide will be necessary in 2002 to complete the eradication of rats from the island. After the implementation of phase one, all involved are even more optimistic that the overall project will be a complete success.

To request a printed copy of the full restoration plan, please contact:

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Other court settlements related to restoring the natural resource injuries caused by pollution events such as oil spills or industrial waste are also being managed by various interagency Trustee Councils in California and throughout the United States.

Restoration Plan Available
(continued from front page)

estimate that as many as 3,200 birds died and 9,500 chicks were not born as a result. The Brown Pelican, a listed endangered species, was severely impacted with an estimated 195 dead birds. Other heavily impacted species included grebes and sea ducks. Other at-risk species in the area during the spill included breeding populations of Xantus's Murrelet and Ashy Storm Petrel.

The Restoration Plan

This Restoration Plan was prepared jointly by the California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, with considerable public input. Implementation of restoration projects began in 2001 and will continue for approximately five or six years. The intent of the collection of restoration projects is to compensate for injuries incurred during the spill and for interim losses incurred during the period of recovery. The plan may be viewed on-line at http://www.darcnw.noaa.gov/amtrader.htm.

Monitoring the Success of the Anacapa Island Project— Xantus's Murrelets and Brown Pelicans

The Xantus's Murrelet is one of the rarest seabirds in the world (less than 10,000 breeding individuals). It only breeds on the Channel Islands of southern California and islands off northwest Baja California in Mexico. Introduced predators, such as the black rat on Anacapa Island, have destroyed or reduced colonies throughout the breeding range. Luckily, on Anacapa Island, a small population continues to exist in areas thought to be less accessible to rats.

Removal of rats from Anacapa is expected to result in increased breeding numbers. Pre-eradication efforts involved the development of monitoring techniques using traditional visual observations as well as more high-tech radar techniques and more innovative night spotlight techniques. Since murrelets are active at night, these unusual techniques have proved invaluable for monitoring.

Monitoring will continue in 2002. Post-eradication monitoring will be conducted periodically for up to ten years following the completion of rat removal.

The California Brown Pelican is a federally endangered species that nests on the ground on Anacapa Island. Although the nesting locations are in areas that have been less intensively used by black rats on the island, nevertheless, it is important to ensure that these important seabirds are protected from predation and habitat destruction caused by the rats. The ATTC is funding a continuation of work which will result in a comprehensive evaluation of the pre- and post-rat eradication status of pelicans on Anacapa Island.

Nesting California Brown Pelican, Anacapa Island

Draft reports summarizing the pre-eradication status of both of these important seabirds should be available in late 2002.

This work is being done for the ATTC by National Park Service, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, Humboldt State University Foundation, Hamer Consulting and California Institute of Environmental Studies with assistance from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Budget Report 1998-2001

American Trader Budget Overview	
Starting funds in 1998	$2,972,157
Interest earned through 10/31/01	$ 502,854
Expenditures and obligations through 12/31/2001	-$1,527,165
Balance as of 12/31/01	$1,947,845

Summary of Expenditures and Obligations	
Anacapa Island Restoration Project	$ 998,833
Pelican Roost Enhancements and GIS atlas	$ 79,727
Restoration Plan Development (TC agencies)	$ 141,140
UCDavis - Restoration Plan assistance	$ 69,100
Administration costs (TC agencies)	$ 139,590
Contract Administration (NFWF and FWS)	$ 98,775
Total Expenditures	$1,527,165

American Trader Trustee Council Representatives

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Since 1999, Carol Gorbics has been the Fish and Wildlife Service's ATTC representative. She is a biologist with extensive restoration experience. She spent over 10 years of her career working on restoration activities following the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska. Scott Sobiech, a Environmental Contaminants biologist, is the Service's alternate representative.

California Dept of Fish & Game

Since 2000, Paul Kelly has been the state's ATTC representative. He is a biologist with extensive experience and publications in seabird restoration activities in California. He has been with OSPR since its inception and has responded to numerous oil spills throughout California. Steve Hampton, a resource economist, is OSPR's alternate representative.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Jennifer Boyce took over as NOAA's lead ATTC representative in 2001, replacing Lt Cmdr Michael Devany. She is a biologist with extensive oil spill response, injury assessment and restoration experience related to seabirds and other natural resources. Katherine Pease, an attorney for NOAA, is NOAA's alternate representative.

What about the mice on Anacapa Island?

Anacapa Island is home to a native deer mouse (Peromyscus maniculatus anacapae) that occurs nowhere else. Since there is no rat-specific toxicant, the mice on Anacapa that eat the rat poison will also die. Therefore, extensive measures are being taken to ensure the survival of this mouse population on Anacapa. In the fall of 2001, an experimental captive population was established on the island and kept away from poisoned areas. This population has done extremely well and will be

released into their new rat-free island habitat in early 2002. Additionally in 2002, it is expected that mice from the non-treated "phase 2" area of the island project will be translocated to the treated "phase 1" rat-free island area to further enhance the population of mice. All involved are optimistic that the deer mouse population will recover and actually increase as a result of rat removal since rats not only ate some of the same food as mice, but also ate the mice themselves.

Events in 2001

- ATTC contracted with Island Conservation, Humboldt State University Foundation, Crescent Coastal Research, California Institute of Environmental Studies, Full Frame Productions and Hamer Consulting to conduct restoration projects.
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation worked closely with the ATTC to facilitate project implementation.
- A federal district court denied a request to stop implementation of the Anacapa Island Restoration Project. The litigation will continue into 2002.
- ATTC activities were highlighted in press coverage from Los Angeles, Ventura, San Diego and other regional newspapers.

Rats Be Gone

American Trader Trustee Council
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
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Carlsbad, CA 92008

The American Trader Trustee Council (ATTC) is an interagency organization that is tasked with restoration of marine bird injuries related to the American Trader oil spill. The court settlement documents provide direction and certain limitations on how the settlement funds can be spent. The council is tasked with administering the funds, implementing restoration activities and assuring that all appropriate state and federal laws are adhered to.

PLANS FOR 2002

The ATTC plans to continue to work to implement the Restoration Plan, as funds allow. Efforts to implement various aspects of programs to enhance coastal Brown Pelican Roosts will be highlighted this year including:

- A cooperative project with San Diego National Wildlife Refuge and Crescent Coastal Research to enhance pelican roosting opportunities; and
- A cooperative project between the Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office and Crescent Coastal Research to develop a pelican roost atlas for coastal California.

Other new projects may include enhancement and protection of Western and Clark's Grebe nesting habitat in California.

The ATTC also has begun a partnership with the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary to develop educational tools to highlight ways people can help protect brown pelicans from human disturbance and injury.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will post opportunities for grants, cooperative agreements and contracts related to implementation of the American Trader Restoration Plan on its web site (http://www.nfwf.org).

Clark's and Western Grebes may be the targets of future restoration work.

Restoring Injured Seabird Resources

For more information about American Trader Trustee Council activities and other restoration check out these websites:

http://www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr/index.html
http://www.darcnw.noaa.gov/amtrader.htm
http://contaminants.fws.gov/Issues/Restoration.cfm
http://www.nps.gov/chis/naturalresources/airp.html